

EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF GPs SURVEILLANCE ACTIVITY ON SUMMER MORTALITY AMONG ELDERLY IN ROME

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Background and aim: Since 2006, a heat prevention program has been operating in Rome; the main component is the active surveillance of at risk population subgroups by General Practitioners (GPs). Regional guidelines recommend GPs to monitor patients a priori classified at medium/high risk through an indicator based on administrative data. GPs surveillance activities during summer include telephone calls and home visits.

The study evaluates the impact of GPs surveillance on summer mortality among elderly (65+ years) residing in Rome in the period 2007-2010.

Methods: Data on all-cause mortality were obtained from the Municipal Mortality Registry. A Poisson regression model was applied to estimate the Relative Risk (RR) of dying during heat wave days among subjects included and not included in the surveillance program stratifying by level of the susceptibility indicator.

Results: Out of 2550 GPs working in Rome, 19% in 2007 and 14% in the following four years participated in the program. GPs monitored about 11,000 patients each summer, 2% of residents. Among patients included in the surveillance the proportion classified at medium/high risk was low throughout the four-years (about 20%). Among medium/high risk subjects, an excess mortality during heat-waves was observed in those not included in the programme in 2007 and 2008 (+32% and +34% respectively), whereas no excess was observed among surveilled patients. In summer 2009, no reduction in mortality among patients under surveillance was observed. An updated mortality analysis will be presented including summer 2010 and stratifying by urban heat island.

Conclusions: Preliminary results showed temporal heterogeneity in the impact of the GPs programme on elderly mortality. Since GPs surveillance represents a challenging and resource-consuming activity, the evaluation of its effectiveness for the prevention of heat-health effects represents a relevant public health issue. Results will be discussed considering specific characteristics of both the programme and subjects included.